

Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 11, 2014 MEETING
School Committee Room (5th Floor), Town Hall, 333 Washington Street

Commissioners Present:

James Batchelor, chair
David King, vice chair
Rosemary Battles Foy
Paul Bell
Wendy Ecker
Elton Elperin
Giti Ganjei Saeidian
Judith Selwyn

Commissioners Absent:

Peter Ames
Kirstin Gamble Bridier
Peter Kleiner

Staff: Greer Hardwicke, Intern Elisheva Yardeni

Members of the Public: See list

Mr. Batchelor began the meeting at 6:37p.m.

Ms. Ganjei Saeidian was appointed to vote for the absent Ms. Battles Foy who later arrived at 6:50pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of minutes was postponed to next meeting.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – DEMOLITION

345 Harvard Street, Devotion School- *Application to demolish Devotion School.* Dr. Hardwicke reviewed the history of the Devotion School, the 1913-194 center section designed by Kilham & Hopkins and the later post WWII wings. She also mentioned that several of the Kennedy children attended school here for several years, Joe, Jack, Rosemary, Kathleen and Eunice. Representing the town was Ray Masak, project manager at Brookline's building department.

Dr. Selwyn inquired which parts of the school were in the demolition application. Dr. Hardwicke answered that all parts of the school are in the application. Mr. Batchelor asked about further process, assuming the committee finds the school buildings significant. Dr. Hardwicke explained the process. Dr. Selwyn discussed about last month's meeting where initial designs were shown. Mr. Bell mentioned that he doesn't find the newer wings significant. Dr. Hardwicke explained that later in the process this can be discussed. Mr. Batchelor added to the motion a note that the declaration focuses on the older wing. Dr. Selwyn motioned, Ms. Ganjei Saeidian seconded and the Commission

VOTED unanimously to declare the Devotion School, especially the 1913-194 section, to historically and architecturally significant and impose a stay of demolition for one year.

Mr. Batchelor asked whether the motion addressed the Devotion House in any way. Dr. Selwyn asked whether the school is on the National Register. After Dr. Hardwicke answered that it was

not, Mr. Batchelor pointed out that changes pertaining to the school would impact the NR listed Devotion House. Dr. Hardwicke explained more intricacies of the case.

88 Cottage Street- Application to demolish house. Dr. Hardwicke presented the case. The applicant, Amelia McCarthy was present.

Jeffrey Allen, applicant's attorney, said they realize the house's architect, George W.W. Brewster designed some worthy houses but he believes this is not one of them, mostly because of changes made to the house in the past. He also feels Brewster's distinctive style is not very well defined in this house. Therefore the applicant wants to provide the option to whoever purchases the property to demolish the house. Terry Maitland, the applicant's real estate agent, showed another house of Brewster's for which a stay of demolition has been lifted very quickly after it was instituted. Mr. Allen continued to address the visibility, which exists for only three neighbors if at all.

Mr. Maitland told the Commission of potential buyers he has shown the house to and how all wanted to change the house significantly or demolish it once it was bought. He believes the house is inauthentic because of the changes made and because it doesn't resemble a typical Brewster plan. The property owner added that the house isn't big enough for a family of more than three and that the ceilings are low. The second story has only two bedrooms.

Mr. King asked to point out the additions to the house. Owner pointed out the tower, dormers, a protruding wing and a room in the inner. The original inner plan was an open second story with high ceilings but when they bought the house the space was closed off to create a second story with 2 bedrooms. Ms. Ganjei Saeidian asked whether a permit was taken out prior to making these changes. Mr. Batchelor explained that the Commission only has jurisdiction in this case because it is a demolition request.

Mr. Elperin asked if the picture windows in the façade are original. Owner said they replaced those windows. Mr. Batchelor asked whether there were drawings of the house. Dr. Hardwicke answered that there weren't.

Jason Fisherman, an abutter, asked whether explosives would be used in the demolition. Dr. Hardwicke answered that this would be a matter for the building department. Mr. Maitland mentioned that sometimes a demolition would leave the base of the house to be built upon. Dr. Hardwicke read an email from Bo Pasternak, an abutter. He is concerned about the demolition affecting the watershed.

Dr. Selwyn emphasized that the Commission is only concerned with historic and architectural issues. She is convinced that no historic significance is left after so many changes have been done to the house. Ms. Ganjei Saeidian asked about the lot boundaries. Mr. Bell thinks that although altered, the house still retains something of its old style. He would hate to see this house come down in order to build a "McMansion". He would rather see a house that builds on the original. Mr. Elperin said he is inclined to agree with Dr. Selwyn although he is charmed by this architect's designs. Mr. Maitland does not think that the new house built there will be a McMansion. Because of the setback and the stream that runs in the lot, the building envelope isn't that big. Mr. Bell added that he agrees there isn't a lot of visibility to the house.

Mr. King agreed with Mr. Bell's first remark. He would like to see a tasteful addition to the house, not another new house. Dr. Selwyn warned that the decision has to be made based on the current architectural significance, not on speculations about future designs. Mr. Maitland addressed the fact, that the property is hard to sell and have been vacant for 1.5 years. Ms. Battles Foy mentioned the adjacent Brewster house case and said it was a very different case. Ms. Ecker said this house might not be taken down.

Dr. Selwyn motioned, Ms. Ecker seconded and the Commission

VOTED three in favor (Ms. Ecker, Dr. Selwyn, Mr. Elperin), three opposed (Ms. Battles Foy, Mr. Bell, Mr. King), one abstained (Mr. Batchelor) NOT to uphold the stay of demolition. The motion failed.

Mr. Batchelor suggested making the opposite motion in order to try and break the tie.

Dr. Selwyn motioned, Ms. Battles Foy seconded and the Commission

VOTED four in favor (Mr. Batchelor, Rosemary, Mr. Bell, Mr. King)), three opposed (Ms. Ecker, Dr. Selwyn, Mr. Elperin) to uphold the stay of demolition.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

5 Irving Street- *Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to install two windows on top story of west (rear) side of house, install five skylights on roof slopes.* Dr. Hardwicke presented the case.

The applicant, Ginger Melton, was present.

Dr. Selwyn asked what the projection of the skylights will be. Philip Kramer, the applicant's architect, answered that it will be 3-4 inches. Mr. Batchelor asked about previous skylight approvals. Dr. Hardwicke answered that these skylights will not be precedent setting.

Dr. Selwyn stated that she does not have a problem with the suggested changes. She feels the skylights could always be reversed. Ms. Battles Foy asked whether one big skylight was ever considered. Mr. Kramer answered that a few smaller skylights are better than one big skylight for ventilation, light and esthetic reasons. Ms. Battles Foy sees very little negative impact on the LHD. It was discussed and decided that the A, B & D configuration were best for the applicant and the district.

Mr. Elperin motioned, Dr. Selwyn seconded and the Commission

VOTED six in favor (Ms. Ecker, Dr. Selwyn, Mr. Elperin, Mr. Bell, Mr. Batchelor, Mr. King), one opposed (Ms. Battles Foy) to approve the skylight and window proposal as presented and discussed.

44 Amory Street - *Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to build stairwell to basement at south (side) of house and install metal fence around well.* Ms. Yardeni presented the case.

Applicants Eli and Sheri Gurock were present.

Architect Jay Gallant explained proposed changes to the house. The applicant wants to have a playroom in the basement and feels that a door would give added safety as the staircase is on the other side of the house completely.

Dr. Selwyn asked what the extent of the changes proposed are. She doesn't feel the information shown to them is enough to make a decision. Mr. Elperin asked what the exposed foundations will be covered with. Ms. Battles Foy asked whether the white fence will be moved. Mr. Gurock answered that it won't be. Dr. Selwyn said she would rather see the proposed entrance closer to the rear of the house. The bay would never have been built with a door under it. Mr. Batchelor added that he thinks moving the door to the back would be much better architecturally. Dr. Selwyn would like to see the applicants come back with a different design. Ms. Battles Foy asked whether a window- well was considered. Dr. Selwyn said the plan shows a room resembling a

bedroom, not a playroom. Dr. Selwyn mentioned she would like to see an elementary site plan. Mr. King agreed.

Ms. Gurock said she feels the basement plan is still being worked out but she doesn't feel any position of the door would be addressing the safety issue in the same degree of success as the one presented before the Commission. Mr. Batchelor added that a different approach, of a deep window- well, might be a possibility. Denis DeWitt suggested a different plan. Dr. Selwyn and Mr. King were not in favor of that idea. Mr. Elperin said he has a problem with having window wells there as well.

Dr. Selwyn motioned, Mr. King seconded and the Commission

VOTED unanimously to continue the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to next month's meeting and to have the applicant bring in a plan in which the door is not positioned as close to the street and does not interrupt the bay window.

Architect asked whether they would have to reapply. Dr. Hardwicke added that there would be no fee since it was a continuation.

Greater Toxteth NCD

Dr. Hardwicke presented the developments on the proposed NCD. Peggy Hogan, a resident, explained more about the neighborhood and its situation- many developers are pushing to make changes in the neighborhood. She believes what make the neighborhood what it is, is the pattern, scale and massing. Most neighbors feel this is important and worth preserving.

Mr. Elperin said he thinks it is an excellent execution of what an NCD is. Mr. Elton also asked who would be responsible for the initial measurements at the creation of the NCD? Mr. Bell told the Commission about the meetings to establish the NCD. Mr. Bachelor added he thinks it's interesting to see how the footprint and size of the properties will be measured. He also feels that all 4 facades should be photographed to get a picture of the current situation.

Dr. Selwyn motioned, Mr. Elperin seconded and the committee

VOTED unanimously that the commission support the establishment of the Greater Toxteth NCD.

Fisher Hill Reservoir Gatehouse

Dr. Hardwicke gave a survey of the proposed rehabilitation plans for the Gatehouse. Ted Touloukian, the architect on the design team has been working on the plans and specifications to go out to bid. He is basing his plans on the CBI and his own investigations. The structure suffers from water damage and will need new slate roofing, gutters, downspouts. (An effort will be made to save as much of the red slate roof as possible.) Also necessary are rebuilding of the chimney area and the parapet as well as re-pointing of the masonry. A second budget will be needed to replace the windows. Dr. Hardwicke is preparing an application for funds for the MPPF grant from MHC.

Mr. DeWitt asked about the extent of the re- pointing. Dr. Selwyn asked whether there are windows in the building now. Dr. Hardwicke answered that there weren't. Ms. Battles Foy inquired about the materials and type of windows. Dr. Hardwicke answered that the windows will be of wood and single pane. She added that some of the frames still exist. Mr. Dewitt said the discussed budget was about half a million dollars. The windows will be on a separate schedule. There is a safety issue as some parts are falling apart. Dr. Selwyn asked about the arch building process. She is not very optimistic about the grant. Mr. DeWitt and Dr. Hardwicke disagreed with her call. Mr. DeWitt is a MHC Commissioner and said that there is a high chance of getting the money. Ms. Ganjei Saeidian asked about the size of the space. Mr. King motioned, Ms. Ecker seconded and the committee

VOTED unanimously to approve the proposed rehabilitation plans of the Fisher Hill Gatehouse by Ted Touloukian as presented and discussed.

Mr. Batchelor adjourned the meeting at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Greer Hardwicke,
Acting Secretary to the Commission

Approved April 8, 2014